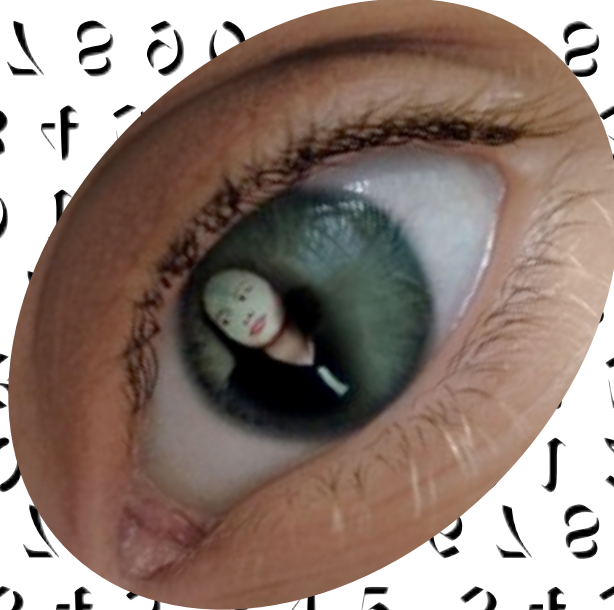




# The Eye of Horus Study Guide to:



NUM8ERS

RACHEL WARD

## **Study Guide Created by the Eye of Horus: Paul Byeon, Mady Flores and Sally Park**

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### **Key Facts**

Title: NUM8ERS

Author: Rachel Ward

Genre: Fiction

Date of Publication: February 2010

Narrator: Jem, a fifteen year old girl who knows of the exact dates in which people will die when she looks into their eyes

Point of View: First Person Narrative

Tone: Pessimistic to being with, but finds its optimistic side as the narrator develops an intimate relationship with the male protagonist

Setting: 2001 when Jem's mother passes away until 2015 when Jem's son is five years old

Protagonists: Jem & Spider (Terry)

\*Major Conflict: Jem grows up to be an isolated teenager with the absence of her biological parents. Even though she sees extraordinary sets of numbers through people's eyes, no one knows about the specialty except her.

\*Rising Action: Jem meets Spider, another extraordinary teenager who seems to be wondering how he should live his life without going through school. Jem and Spider suddenly get involved in an inevitable chase in which they are the runners.

\*Climax: Jem and Spider develop a very sincere relationship but are separated by their fates as there are numerous cop chases along their journey.

\*Falling Action: Spider faces his death in an unexpected way, and Jem recognizes that there is not a single thing she can do in order to change the numbers that she sees.

\*Foreshadowing: At the very end of the novel, even though Jem loses her ability to see the numbers as she lives a normal life, her five year old Adam implies that he can see strange numbers over people's heads.

- The entire trip of Jem and Spider is a course of less than a single week
- Jem ends up losing her ability as she goes on to live a normal life after Spider's death
- Not once does Jem mention anything about her dad in the course of the 40 chapters
- Jem and Spider is expected to form an extraordinary combination as Jem is a White female while Spider is an African American male
- A number of expressions and even locations are of England as Rachel Ward is an English writer (Example: the London Eye)
- As one of this novel's themes suggests, with only one exception of Val, Jem and Spider come to hate and not get along with any of the adults, but come across a miraculously intimate relationship with even a strange teenager on the streets
- Excessive and unnecessary degree of self-consciousness is one critical aspect that keeps the suspense going
- Even though the protagonists could have easily covered their reactions up with a well thought-out lie or two, they decide to take the hard way in running away from public attention

## **Character List:**

*Jem*- A misunderstood, five foot, fifteen year old who likes to be alone who narrates the events in her perspective. Jem became a foster child at six years old and has been living a crooked life ever since. She has the ability to see the date people die just by looking at their eyes.

*Terry Dawson (aka Spider)*- He is a six foot tall, energetic, African American teenager with bushy hair. He likes to smoke, show off to the other misfits in school, and does not bathe. Spider also lives with Val, who is his nan. He befriends Jem and eventually they get into a relationship.

*Jem's Mother*- She is featured only in the beginning when Jem is having a flashback at six years old. Jem's mother is a drug addict and single mother who later died of an overdose. She did not understand Jem's ability with numbers and didn't think much of it. She left Jem to grow up independently because she was corrupted with drugs.

*Jordan*- Another misfit in Jem's school, but he is not one of her friends. He messes with Jem at school because Spider beat him up. Basically he is not on good terms with Jem and Spider.

*Baz*- He is the ring leader of the gang Spider works for. He hires Spider to be their "messenger" and to do their dirty tasks. Eventually Spider steals some money from him before he runs away with Jem, but Baz won't let them go that easily.

*Tattoo Face*- He is one of the strongest and most intimidating members of Baz's gang. He later pursues Spider and Jem to get Baz's money back. Eventually he dies in a police station after he gets arrested with Spider.

*Val*- She is Spider's nan and the only family both of them have. She is old with a hard face and hair dyed dark purple. Like Jem, she has a unique gift in which she can read people's auras. Val is caring and understand person who lets Jem and Spider have their freedom.

*Karen-* She takes care of Jem and a pair of twins as their foster mother. Karen is a strict and experienced adult, having raised twenty-two foster children before Jem. She aims to give Jem a real loving family environment.

*Britney-* The chief of police's daughter who takes Jem in when she was on the run. Britney is a typical girly-girl teenager around Jem's age. She helps Jem hide for a night in her house and never tells anyone where Jem was, even though she could have told her father.

*Rita-* She is a stout and friendly woman who owns a café Jem and Spider stop to eat at. She talked to Jem and Spider about how important it was let their families know that they were fine, even if they were runaways. She is looking for her son who was also a runaway.

*Anne-* She is the Rector's wife who helps Jem sort out her problems with the police, and takes care of her in the church. She is a kind, religious woman who appreciates her life and helps people in trouble. She is a plain looking person who wears simple clothing, but she has ugly, short permed hair.

*Rector-* He is in charge of the church Jem stays at. At first he is not welcoming nor understanding of people like Jem. He eventually lets Jem stay in the church.

*Simon-* He is also involved with the church and works under the Rector. Simon is a man in his twenties who gives Jem sanctuary. He is timid and a pushover who does not like complicated situations.

*Adam-* He is Jem and Spider's five-year-old son who inherited the gift of see people's numbers. He is tall and energetic just like Spider, almost a spitting image. Adam is a sweet little boy who is somewhat behind in school, but he won't end up like his parents.

## **Major Character Analysis:**

### *Jem-*

Before Jem met Spider, she preferred being alone because having contact with people would allow her to see their numbers. Jem does not appreciate her gift and treats it more like a curse ever since she figured out what they mean. The numbers are just dates of death which Jem cannot change, therefore she cannot save anyone from their fate. After becoming attached to Spider she eventually became stressed because she started to care more about people's lives. In a way she was in charge of their lives because the numbers were apart of her and she could see them. By the end of the book, Jem has grown into a mature and responsible young adult because she became a mother. She changed her misunderstood and self-centered persona into something better.

### *Terry Dawson (aka Spider)-*

He became Jem's first friend and did not ignore her like others did. Spider is the one who understands Jem the best even though they were strangers just recently. Along with Jem, he is a misunderstood misfit who gets into trouble. Readers first perceive Spider as this type of character, but it turns out that he is a caring person with ambitions. Spider does not like being looked down upon and wants respect. After working for Baz he thought he had made something out of himself because he finally had money and accomplishment, but they were false. Despite all the trouble Spider gets into with Jem, he is not ignorant. When showing his love for Jem he did not let his pride and "tough guy" act bring him down. He was willing to do anything for her and even shed tears to show his need for her.

### *Val-*

Since she and Spider make up a small family, Val is very attached to Spider. She loves him more than anything, even if he is not the ideal child people would want. However Val still loves him because she knows he is a good kid. Despite being a heavy smoker, she will live long according to Jem's vision. Val is another person who understands Jem well because she has the ability to read auras. Like Jem, she has a unique gift. She isn't a strict and forceful adult

compared to others in this book. The way she cares for them is by letting them have complete freedom in their actions. She was the only adult who Jem and Spider alerted that they would run away because she can be trusted. Without asking, Val already figured out that Jem had a special gift because she read her aura. More importantly, Val did not force the truth out of Jem and waited until she was ready to talk. Val is respectful of other's space and is another misunderstood character because of her crooked lifestyle.

#### *Karen-*

She is a typical overprotective parent who wants the best for their children. Even though Jem is her foster child, she still gives her love and support. When she caught up to Jem, readers realize that she truly cares for Jem because she was worried to death. Sometimes earlier in the book Karen seemed to be uncaring of Jem's actions and just let her be, but her true intentions were revealed. She doesn't understand Jem's true self and needs, especially after she learns of her gift. When she learned about it she did not believe Jem, but she became more convinced later on. Karen later suggested that Jem should state that she lied to the public in order to prevent further problems. This again shows that she is looking out for Jem's well-being because she knows that Jem would not want to enter another mess.

#### *Britney-*

Of all the places that were unexpected to take Jem in, Britney's house was the most. She is the police chief's daughter and for her to take in a criminal on the run is a huge deal. Her actions show that despite what her parents say, she has her own mind. Britney Jem's reputation from outside influences, but she decided to judge her based on how she was in person. Again, Britney uses her own mind to make judgments. She and Jem connect because they are both teenagers dealing with adults who don't understand them. Even though Britney has a better lifestyle and upbringing compared to Jem, they are not treated at the adult level. Teenagers are seen as reckless and in need of disciplining in this book. They both understand each other because they are at the same level in their lives where they are still growing up.

#### *Anne-*

Jem gives Anne respect because she is willing to help other people with their problems even though she has her own. When readers first see her in the book, she prepares food for Jem to eat and finds her a place to sleep in the church. She is basically a hospitable woman on Jem's side since many do not understand her. She tries to understand Jem and is not quick to judge her, unlike her husband. Anne is religious and appreciates her life. She sees the beauty in things such as in Jem's gift, even when Jem couldn't. Her belief is to be thankful for whatever God gives to his people. She tries to be Jem's friend and shares her words of wisdom because again she likes to help others.

#### *Rector-*

It was surprising how he is part of the church, but did not want to accept Jem when she wanted help. He is a religious man who follows God, but yet he did something God would not want. Eventually Simon convinced him through the path of God so he changed his mind. Even if the rector is a religious man who should extend a hand to all, he is still classified as an adult who doesn't understand people like Jem. His character shows that adults will still have their way of thinking, and might forget what is really important. He automatically assumed from the news that she would be a troublemaker and even though she was, he should have felt pity and tried to help her.

#### *Simon-*

He was not completely into the idea of giving Jem sanctuary, but when he saw that she was desperate he did the right thing. Still he panicked and regretted his decision after letting her in. This emphasizes his character of not liking complicated situations because he gets easily stressed out. He is more like a follower in which he is somewhat timid. His job is hard when he keeps people away from Jem. Naturally he is a kind-hearted, simple person who also likes to help people. Sometimes he can be easily offended when Jem doesn't say the right thing to him.



### **Important Quotations:**

- 1) “It was easier talking in the dark. I didn’t feel so self-conscious, the words just tumbled out. Or perhaps it was just Britney; she was a good talker and a good listener. I felt like I could say anything to her” (Ward 214).

#### **Explanation-**

Britney did not have to think twice about helping Jem. The adults abide by the rules and know that young teens like Jem do not deserve to get away with their actions. Young teens like Britney understand Jem because she is at the same level, even if she is not involved in a crime. They know people don’t give them the benefit of the doubt sometimes because teens are younger and reckless. The adults have a world run by rules and a schedule to follow, but the younger teens have their own out-of-the-ordinary world where only they can understand each other. Also Britney is the police chief’s daughter who is hunting for Jem, yet she helps Jem. Jem feels that she can trust her despite the connection because they both deal with the hardships of being teens.

- 2) “Made me feel lonely, seeing a snapshot of other people’s lives. They were warm, secure...they had people, they belonged. I made myself move on——no good thinking what other people had” (Ward 229).

#### **Explanation-**

Jem may act like she doesn’t like her foster family or she wants to be alone all the time, but she like all people want the company of others. She does want a family because all her life, before losing her mother, she was sent to multiple foster homes. Jem doesn’t like to think about having a family and would rather push it away because it makes her feel more alone and misunderstood. Jem cannot associate with regular people who have families because she has always been a crooked child. In this book the regular people ignore people like her because they are seen as negative influences, even though they are just misunderstood.

- 3) “She held me for a long time. There was a lot of emotion from her, in that hug; it surprised me, kind of repulsed me, too, but I didn’t pull away. It was like she’d really missed me—I would have thought she’d be glad for the peace and quiet of the past few days” (Ward 253-254).

Explanation-

Jem can sometimes be oblivious for example, she completely missed the fact that Karen does care for her. Since Jem doesn’t like to socialize with people, she does not know how to react to emotional interactions between people. She knew Karen was just trying to help her in the past, and complained that it wasn’t the help she needed. She is oblivious to people’s true intentions and their actual feelings for her. Jem’s way of thinking can be understood because people have always pushed her away or looked down upon her. Therefore she doesn’t know what real love and support feels like.

- 4) ““You mean someone has given me this. I must have done something bloody awful to deserve it.’ ‘God may have given it to you. Maybe it’s not so much a gift to you, but a gift to all of us’” (Ward 287).

Explanation-

This is an example of the difference between the young and old. Jem was basically telling Anne that she does not appreciate her gift because she thinks it’s more like a curse. Anne is older and more wise, therefore she sees it in a positive light. She thinks that Jem should appreciate her God-given talent because it came from him. Even though Jem may not see her gift like Anne does, her gift is still a blessing to many people. It makes people think differently about death, maybe in a way of relief or hope. Even if Jem believes she cannot help them through her gift, it can still fulfill a purpose.

- 5) ““Solid, man, solid. If you really want to do this, I’ll do it with you. We’ll go together. I love you, Jem. I don’t want anyone or anything else”” (Ward 310).

#### Explanation-

Spider and Jem are both on the high point of the church, ready to commit suicide together, but before they do Spider confesses his love to Jem. Spider became the character that the readers would not expect from him. He first appeared to be another careless troublemaker. However he actually turned out to be a caring person with a kind heart and fighting soul. He is willing to do anything for Jem because he could not live without her, such as commit suicide with her. He knew that Jem would be hard to persuade into changing her mind, yet he respects her decision and supports her. In the end however, Jem changes her mind at the last minute because she realized that it would be the wrong way to go.

### **Themes and Symbols**

#### Theme #1 **What you see is not everything.**

A common cliché, don’t judge a book by its cover, can also be said about one of the major themes of this novel. There is much more to a person than what a person looks like on the outside. This happens in the case of Spider quite frequently. “...when, without any warning, something exploded into the room. The door swung back on its hinges and crashed into the wall behind, and Spider burst in like he’s been fired out of a cannon, stumbling on his feet, almost falling over.” (10). Spider has a pretty tough appearance and is extremely tall. Therefore people usually get intimidated by him. But in reality he is a kind person with an extremely strong sense of moral judgement. Even in rushed and hard situations, he does the right thing. Such as at Rita’s Diner, even as Jem and Spider were in a hurry to get out of the place, Spider stopped to pay for the bill placed on the table. Who would do that?

And Jem realizes this later in the novel in the end as well. "...having real friends, something to have a laugh with, learning to trust people, open up a bit. It changed my whole outlook on life - I'd been so hung up on the numbers that I'd let them paralyze me, I can see that now. The numbers had stopped me from living." (319). The numbers can be seen as a part of physical appearance for Jem because it is one of the first things she sees in people. However, her obsession with the numbers did not let her continue on her life as a normal child or teenager would. The numbers were always an obstacle to Jem before she could open up to anyone. However, from Britney, Spider and many other characters throughout the book, she finally figures that the numbers are nothing but another part of image people show.

## Theme #2 **Predetermined Life.**

It is a controversial issue even in real life, whether life is already mapped out for everyone at birth or whether life can change depending on each unique event. This novel tends to be more in favor of a pre-determined life. All the little events that seem to be spontaneous were all meant to happen. "How everything is fixed for us. It's like it don't matter what I do because the end will be the same." (192). This is when Spider begins to question this ideology that Jem just had for years and year because she found that the numbers she saw never changed.

To Jem, it is a blatantly obvious fact that everything we do does not change anything. This can be found in the death of the tattooed man as well. To the police and to everyone, the death of the tattooed man was sudden. However, Jem expected his death because she had already seen the date of his death. Even if I were to be in that position, I would have a firm belief that nothing changes the dates, which can be shown in the following quote from Jem. "Nothing makes any sense. Nothing means anything. You're born, you live, you die. That's it." (192).

## Symbol #1 **The angels that Jem draws.**

The angels that Jem drew, although distorted, represented peace for Jem. "Some of them had their faces missing, or an arm or a leg. One of them had ridiculously long limbs and springy Afro hair - I put him at the top, spreading his wings and flying across the ceiling. I did a little bald one right down by the skirting board sort of hunched up, wrapped her wings around herself." (315). Perhaps the distortions represented the way that Jem and Spider felt when walking through the world that did not accept them as openly as they wished. Due to the gazes of the other people around, they would have probably felt distorted as well, especially Spider.

There had been various cases of indirect discrimination mentioned in this novel towards Spider. Therefore, perhaps that was the reason for the distortion of the tall angel above all the others. Also, Jem probably felt safe because Spider said that he would always be there for her. Without Jem, Spider would have nothing left to cherish shown in the following quotation, "I can't go on without you, man. There'll be nothing left." He got to his feet, held out his hand. "Give me your hand, Jem. Help me up." (309). This quote may also tie into the theme of

appearance is not everything. Although Karen freaked out when seeing this picture because of the warped and unusual bodies, Jem did not care because it was comforting to her.

## Symbol #2 **Weston**

Weston is a type of utopia of this novel. It is described as such a peaceful and perfect place to be. How great should it be for Spider to remember that trip to Weston as a young child with Val? “I took him there, you see, when he was little. A sort of holiday. I’m glad he remembered...we could take him there, to Weston. Say good-bye properly.” (314). And even the way that Val phrases it, she says it was like a holiday, a time to get away from reality for a while.

Even when Jem later moved to Weston with Adam after Karen had passed away, she describes it as a place of freedom and a good place to raise Adam. “...he’s into everything....He’s the kind of boy that needs to burn off some energy on the swings or running ‘round the park...There’s so much space here...” (324). This type of environment will definitely not make Adam go through the exact same things as Jem. And even for Jem, it is a place of her dreams because it is a place where she had hope of meeting Spider. “It’s a place we talked about, Spider and me. Even though he’s locked up at the moment, I’m going to keep heading there” (224). And he will always be in the vicinity of Jem and Adam because his ashes were scattered in Weston.

## **Section Summaries**

### **Chapter 1- 2**

The story starts with a description of average teenagers as the narrator seems to have a hard time fitting in as a typical fifteen year old. One aspect that keeps her away from the crowd is her character as a social outcast; she justifies such segregation through complaining about how unfortunate of a life she has lived. All of a sudden, the extraordinary numbers that she has always seen over people's heads start to mean something as her mother comes across a fatal death.

Even after a few days, Jem does not seem to get better from the idea that she is all alone in her life. However, an unexpected figure suddenly comes to her rescue. An African American friend, Spider, makes an effort to cheer her up by trying to talk her into join his gang and so on. As they both struggle through each class, Jem and Spider come to form a strange bond that will lead them on to become best friends. One day, their teacher Mr McNulty plans a special class for his students so that they can take a moment to briefly think of their futures. Completely offended by such comments as “unemployed, checkout girl, garbage man and cleaning lady” (p. 12), Jem and Spider decide to leave school and live their own lives.

### **Chapter 3 - 4**

As Jem is invited into Spider's house, she encounters his nanny who is the first one in Jem's life to at least recognize that Jem has lived a different life than others have. The most important comment of the section being, “I understand. It's a gift, but it's a curse, too” (p. 21), Jem is simply glad to finally meet someone who at least assumes that she is a special one granted with such spiritual aura.

After having an intriguing meeting with Spider's family, Jem shows reluctance to go back to where she lives where her foster mother Karen waits with the twenty-two kids she looks after. Calling her own house a torture chamber, Jem shows how unattached she is to her home through this short section.

#### Chapter 5 - 6

Jem and Spider come to form an even stronger bond as they are officially segregated from the crowd. As they develop even their dirty habits together, they feel for each other in that they realize in a joking manner that they are meant to be together.

When Jem visits Spider's house for the second time, the nanny named Val is ready to ask personal questions this time. Jem in a way assumes that Val has somehow found out about the ability to see death dates but does not give into her detailed questionnaire. To the rescue, again, Spider stops the informal investigation but does not recognize any of the content or the significance of the topic discussed.

As others come to make sense of the rumor that Jem and Spider are going out, the two go on an unofficial date to a Saturday night party. Even though Jem at first feels that a drama is the last thing she needs, she eventually gives into Spider's request and end up opening up to him as the party goes on.

#### Chapter 7 - 8

Suddenly becoming aware of the fact that Spider's death date is due in about a week, Jem attempts to stop any source of potential threat. However, in contrast to what Jem plans to do with

him, Spider goes on to take care of his business which Jem immediately finds out that his new mission deals with the transportation of illegal drugs.

After the suspense is alleviated, Jem returns home to come across Karen. Jem is scolded to the point where she feels as if she does not belong in this world, or to be alive at all commenting, “I had nothing, so I could do anything now. Anything I wanted I had nothing left to lose” (p. 58).

Jem leaves the house as she constantly feels unwanted. In her unplanned journey with Spider, they encounter an old man struggling to carry himself on his two legs. When Jem’s and the man’s eyes meet, a set of numbers registers in Jem’s mind, informing her of the designated death dates of the old man. She curiously follows the man and eventually indirectly causes him to his death by making him run on to the roads as he is run over by a car.

## Chapter 9

Spider demands a reasonable explanation after having to come across such a unique incident. However, not giving a full reasoning behind why she decided to follow the old man is Jem. Now that she has seen the destined consequences herself, Jem comes to realize that the death dates are official.

Not willing to take note of her ability ever again, she tries her best not to remind herself of the talent. However, as Spider and Jem wait for the London Eye on a friendly trip, Jem encounters people with the same sets of numbers as she looks around at the waiting line. Realizing that something is going to happen within a few hours, Jem convinces Spider to make a run with him. As she is later on questioned how she was able to get away from a terrorist attack



on the London Eye, Jem shows trust and friendship by speaking of her ability for the first time in her life.

#### Chapter 10 - 11

Mesmerized by such insane information, Spider does not stop asking her questions as he is in a psychological panic. As the two eventually hear that the police is in search of them for evidence and justification, they decide to make a run together, not knowing what they are getting themselves into.

Jem marks the day as the official beginning of her real life, where she can truly be herself and have fun even under a life threatening situation. As the two are extremely cautious of every single course of actions they take, they decide to stop by Spider's to pick up some supply that will keep them safe and alive for the journey they are about to go on.

#### Chapter 12

Jem continues on with the excitement as she comments, "I was living out a dream: Spider and I were movie stars; it was exciting, dangerous, too cool to be true" (p. 92). Not recognizing the severity of the consequences that their decision to run from the police will bring later on, Jem focuses only on developing a mutual relationship with Spider. As Jem and Spider think that they have traveled far enough that they would not be found, Spider pulls out a stack of money that Jem guesses the origin to it: the drug dealing. Regardless of the immoral acts they carry on with, Jem enjoys the moment as it was clear to her that Spider was loving his time as well.

### Chapter 13 - 14

In contrast to the excitement and the joy they have lived with for the past couple of hours, Jem and Spider are left with the fundamental questions regarding finding strategies for survival. As they put thoughts into this realistic topic, Jem inadvertently reminds herself that she only has a few days left with Spider, unless she does something to change his numbers.

Jem and Spider end up at an edge of a small river where they try to walk across it. As Spider tries to make an example out of his courage and masculinity, he suddenly disappears as he is swept across by the downstream. At this point, Jem starts to panic as a response to the loneliness she comes to face as Spider goes missing.

### Chapter 15 - 17

Jem miraculously pulls herself together and saves Spider from being swept across by the water. As Spider tries to break the ice by making jokes about first kisses, Jem comes to realize that she went out of her way to sacrifice and risk to do someone else a benefit. In discussing the matter of death, Jem is continuously bothered by her own assumption that her best friend and first love Spider is going to die shortly, in one way or another.

Jem and Spider try their best to keep their excitement going by “feeling alive” (p. 129). In the process of getting ready to go to sleep for the night, the two get into fighting about what they must do in order to survive; Spider argues that they must keep the pace going while Jem supports the strategy of staying at the same spot as there will be less movement. In the midst of their argument, the sound of a helicopter breaks the conversations apart.

As they try to justify themselves that the police does not have the certified rights to question the two as they have voluntarily escaped from the scene. The two go on to talk about if they have had anyone who has cared for them. As they reach a common conclusion that they both lost their parents in an inadvertent accident or an illness. Jem and Spider reach the absolute peak of their trust relationship as they figure out about each other's parents as well.

#### Chapter 18 - 19

In this relatively short section, Jem comments that she feels closer and more trustworthy not just because of the sexual relationship they go through but also due to the great lingering friendship as a life partner that Spider has been for her. After certifying the love they have for each other, Jem and Spider walk across the gigantic field and decide to sit in a restaurant for breakfast. Even though they comment that they should have been together long time ago in a jokingly manner, the vibe between the two suggests that they are even willing to share the same fate as the two have come too far.

#### Chapter 20

A female server named Rita comes into play a significant role in alleviating the stress involved. However, beginning of chapter 20 is the point in which, all of a sudden, Jem and Spider's peaceful and intimate journey shifts into a series of cop chases. Even though Rita opened up to the two harmless teenagers by speaking of her own foregone son, she has enough rationale behind her emotions that she is willing to turn both of them in to the police. As Rita,

who has seemed so kind, in fact too nice, identifies the faces of the two “fugitives” on the front page of the newspaper,

### Chapter 21 - 23

Jem and Spider prepare for the greatest and potentially the most painstaking trip they will ever have to take. The two shop at a local grocery shop. However, Jem goes through another panic as she is excessively self-conscious about whether or not the store clerk would recognize her or not. Successfully ending her task by picking up enough food for the next week or two, Jem and Spider walk down the street in search of a car to steal, when they suddenly spot whom they go on to call, Tattoo Face.

Tattoo Face without hesitation starts to rush towards Jem and Spider. Not having a single clue why they are running, Jem and Spider are devastated by the intense chase. As Tattoo Face eventually eases down the intensity by trying to convince the two that he is not trying to harm them, Jem and Spider find out that he is one of the drug dealer’s associates. Tattoo Face states with a threatening aura that he is here to collect what belongs to one of his friends, the money that Spider stole. The scene ends when police sirens ring as Spider beats Tattoo Face down after he infers that he made a “friendly” visit to Val earlier on.

### Chapter 24 - 26

As Jem decides to make a run from the dead-end situation, she meets a huge threat: Jem meets a girl named Britney, a daughter of a police officer. As Britney is already aware of the entire situation, she states that she is willing to help her out due to how famous Jem is. Showing

excessive kindness, Britney leads on to inadvertently make Jem uncomfortable by being too nice, making her decide to leave without telling. Even though their relationship never meets an official conclusion, Jem believes that Britney was actually one of the few people she could click with and open up entirely regardless of how short of period it has been since they have first seen each other on the streets. Jem also considers the experience with Britney as one of the most memorable caring moments of her life as she has constantly felt isolated.

#### Chapter 27 - 29

A few hours of confusion and isolation pass as Jem is wondering around the streets, feeling sick and falling asleep in random places. After she dreams about a man chasing after her, gasping, Jem realizes that even that short dream comes true in her life in that she starts sprinting as soon as the eyes of two police officers lock on Jem. She immediately and desperately asks for help as she runs down the street, away from the police. Trying to find anywhere to hide, Jem gets lucky enough to spot a guy who is about to swing his door closed, stopping his movement as soon as he sees Jem running busting into his face. Even though all Jem says is, "Help me, please. I'm scared. Please let me in" (p. 239), the man is kind enough to spare her a breath by letting the troubled teenager into his home, which turns out to be a sanctuary.

Introducing himself is Simon, as he tries to ease Jem down from the pressure and the panic she has been in. He asks some quick and straightforward questions in order to make sense of the situation. However, Simon does not go further on to ask anything about why or how Jem has ended up getting chased by a pair of cops. Suddenly feeling safe and secure by a new source of protection.

## Chapter 30

As time passes, however, Simon asks Jem for just a short explanation in how Jem has gotten to the point: not for his own self-fulfillment but in order to justify, that she is in a stymied position as a teenage refugee without a place, to the rector. Jem comes to believe that the only way they will ever let her stay in the sanctuary, away from the police, is by letting them into her world: sharing the curse she has carried on by herself for the past fifteen years.

This form of resignation and giving in to the situation shows how exhausted Jem has come to be when compared to the beginning of the novel where she would do anything to prevent anyone else finding out, except Spider of course. As soon as Karen shows up, the one person that Jem does not need to see at the moment, Jem realizes that her sincere decision to reveal the secret will turn in to a mere lie. Knowing Karen well enough, Jem knows that Karen will convince and even go on to scold Jem for telling a “lie” and messing with people’s minds. However, one person is there for support. As Anne, the wife of the rector, confesses that she has suffered from an illness for quite a long time, she wonders about if Jem has any hints on when and where she will meet her end. Simply refusing to go that far to take advantage of the curse, Jem lets Anne know of how careful she is with the numbers that she sees and is not willing to break her own rule of not telling anyone.

Jem: “I can see the day, the date, when people are going to die.” (p. 251)

### Chapter 31 - 34

In the following few chapters, Jem takes her time in trying to make a negotiation with the police. This reaction of hers is the result of her reflection on what life and death means in individual's life as she goes around the sanctuary, indirectly coming across the end of everything: death. In the process of negotiating, Jem makes a legal agreement that states that the police will hand over Spider before his "due date" if Jem willingly cooperates in the investigation.

After a few hours of questioning and answering, the police and Jem come to an end of the negotiation as the police tells Jem that Spider will be summoned shortly. In the process of waiting for her one and only demand of her entire life, people stream in as they wonder about their own dates of their ends. Jem publicly concludes that she would not, in any circumstance, inform anyone of his or her dates since such course of action is simply considered as something that is far beyond what a person *deserves* to know.

### Chapter 35 - 37

Regardless of the efforts made by Jem to alleviate the pressure she feels from those who are willing to do whatever to find out about their dates of death, the group of ill patients does not seem to get smaller. As a response to such dilemma, Karen uses this opportunity to convince Jem to admit that she has been speaking of a lie all along. Deciding that it would be the best strategy to make the crowd ease out of the sanctuary, Jem hesitantly takes the advice and takes another chance to speak in front of the same desperate crowd.

As Jem awaits for Spider's arrival after a successful attempt to get rid of the crowd, she suddenly feels the need to look ready and clean for Spider as their very last time to express their

love was coming up. As expected, the two do not spend any time feeling awkward around each other but succeeds to sincerely speak to each other in the most truthful tone. However, seeing the unchanged death dates through Spider's eyes, again, Jem realizes that it is time to wrap everything up: the memories, the friendship, the love and even the one and only source of happiness she has ever lived with.

### Chapter 38 - 39

A sudden lightbulb goes on in Jem's head as she makes the last effort to do whatever possible to stop the death dates proving to be true. As an unreasonable method, she decides to commit suicide by jumping off the roof of the sanctuary as she has her own rationale behind this decision. Once Jem gets to the roof and prepares for the end, Spider is in front of her face to stop this sudden outburst.

Not having to know anything about even his own date of death, Spider successfully convinces her to step down from the edge of the roof. As they decide to walk down the roof together, Spider jokes around hopping around on the rooftop. There is simply no emotion or surprise displayed through Jem's face as she sees Spider slip off the wet tiles of the roof and meet his end in such an unexpected way. Jem is more shocked by how unexpectedly it all happened than she is by the simple fact that the Spider's numbers are now gone as he met his end.



### Final Chapter: “Five Years Later”

Noting that the hardcore journey of Jem and Spider lasted only for a couple of days, Jem seems to be a lot more mature and settled than she was five years ago. As she is now a mother of a five year old Adam, she lives a thankful life keeping in mind that Spider has always been the one for her: the one who has taught her about the beauty of being alive and loving others. Through this typical life, Jem is able to wash the curse away, now being able to live a normal life.

On an ordinary school day, Jem is asked to be speak with Adam’s teacher for brief talk. As the conversation starts off by speaking of Adam’s general behavior, everything flows without any trouble, just until the teacher shows Jem a picture her family that Adam drew, each with a set of numbers flying above their heads.

## **Study Questions!**

### **Chapter 1 - 2**

*What does Jem start to see as a child?*

- Jem has the ability to see the dates of deaths of everyone when she looks into their eyes. Because of this ability, Jem usually refuses to become close with anyone. But then, does not attempt to help anyone from their death.

*What activity does Mr. McNulty set up for his class in order to make them think about their future?*

- Mr. McNulty creates an activity assigning certain people in the class some jobs that he thinks of as more unskilled jobs. However, the class who received these unprofessional jobs did not give an answer that the teacher wanted because Spider had been indirectly leading the class otherwise.

*Describe Jem.*

- Jem is a girl who would not usually be part of the group. She would be the quiet one that prefers not to go out and play but just stay inside by themselves because she has a tendency not to trust people.

### **Chapter 3 - 4**

*What does Val claim that Jem have?*

- Val says that she has a gift of seeing the aura's of people. And she says that Jem has a very special aura and tells Jem that she has a very special and unique gift.

*What kind of environment does Jem grow up in?*

- Jem is raised by a foster care mother, Karen. Karen already has multiple foster children besides Jem to be taking away attention from her.

*Do you think that Val's "gift" is something real?*

- I think Val's gift is not something as special as Jem's. However, I do believe that she has a special ability to get a gist of a person's personality due to the wisdom acquired.

### **Chapter 5 - 6**

*Where do Jem and Spider go on their first official meeting as friends that is not a date?*

- They go to Baz's party where Jem is revealed to partially what Spider does. But he does not tell her exactly what he does, only states that he helps maintain hold of Baz's money.

*Who does Jem follow in chapter 5? Why?*

- She follows an old man who she scares away. This is how Jem responded to the numbers, she would follow the person with that day's numbers. She feels that this is right because she feels it is not right for the people to know the date they die, which is the reason for not telling anyone their number.

*What kind of job or errands do you think Spider does outside of school?*

- It does not specifically mention what kind of job Spider does. But we know it is not something as dangerous as actual dealing of illegal goods.

## **Chapter 7 - 8**

*In response to the injustices Jem feels against Karen and her school, what does she do?*

- Jem completely trashes her room. At first, she started throwing the things around her in order to relieve the stress. But that process ended up going through everything in her room.

*How does Karen respond to this situation? Is it like a typical foster parent or not?*

- Karen seems to be detached to Jem. She simply asks what Jem has left now that she broke everything she owned. I think this would not be like the typical foster parent, because it seemed like a completely distant conversation.

*What does Jem realize at the London fair on Oxford Street?*

- Jem realizes that everyone at the fair had the same number. Therefore, she deduced that something was going to happen at that location.

## **Chapter 9 -10**

*How does Jem justify how she knew about the London Eye accident?*

- At first, she tries to simply tell Spider it was a gut feeling. However, as he did not believe that, Jem told him the truth of her ability to see the dates.

*What kind of response did Spider have when he heard about Jem's gift?*

- His response was not that special, he slightly panicked, but composed himself soon after. And as anyone would be curious, asked Jem what his number was. But as any other person, Jem avidly refused to tell his number.

*After Jem and Spider see the news about the terrorist attack placing them as the suspects, what do they decide to do? Is this the correct thing to do in this situation?*

- They do not seem to think much and just agree to run away. They do not even agree on where to go, just out of the blue, they would be running away from the police. This is probably one the worst ways to act in this situation, because running away will only make them look more suspicious and guilty of some action.

## **Chapter 11 - 12**

*How does Jem get ready to run away?*

- She goes to the medicine cabinet to get some medications. When she sees the scissors, she impulsively cuts her hair short like a boy.

*What are some essentials that you would need to take when running away?*

- Some essentials are food, money, and at least one pair of new clothes. I think they should have taken real food they could eat as a meal because all they took was some cans of soda and chips.

*If they are trying to stay undiscovered, then would it be a good idea to walk the vast fields, because that might look even more weird?*

- I actually thought while reading this that it would have been more easier detectable for the police if they traveled through the vast empty lands. It might have actually been a better idea to have hid among the people and run away, if Spider was not so noticeable.

### **Chapter 13 - 14**

*How do the attitudes differ from Jem and Spider about camping and their journey?*

- Although they are both pretty immature, Jem thinks more of the happier side of camping like that is a completely new experience for her. While Spider thinks more of the survival aspect of camping at this moment because surviving is one of their major concerns.

*What was Jem having trouble with during this journey?*

- Jem has trouble with everything. She is just not used to the countryside, she probably lived in London for her entire life making a rapid and drastic change to be camping in the country.

*Why does Jem have a sudden change in attitude from chapter 13 to 14?*

- She has a sudden change in attitude because she becomes more serious about running away. She finally realizes how much is risked because the police suspect Jem and Spider to be terrorist from the London Eye incident.

### **Chapter 15 - 16**

*What happens to Spider when they are crossing the river?*

- Spider falls into the half frozen river. Jem panics from this because she is still afraid of being left alone in the wilderness by herself.

*What event allowed Spider and Jem to become more understanding of each other?*

- Jem and Spider have a conversation of their mother and parents. Jem has lost her mother to an overdose of drugs, while Spider, whose parents simply did not want him and gave him up to Val. From this conversation, they probably become more intimate as friends because they share the pain of losing someone.

*Do you think they heard an owl or a helicopter in the night?*

- At first they do not realize the sound to be a helicopter because it was probably at a distance to not make a very distinct helicopter noise. But they do eventually realize it to be a helicopter and move away into a nearby barn.

### **Chapter 17 - 18**

*What do you think will happen to them if they are caught?*

- Spider says that Jem would probably get lost in the system because of the Social Services and he will definitely go to jail. However, I think that if they do get caught, they will both receive equal treatment.

*What is the moment that Spider and Jem officially become closer and bond?*

- Spider confesses his love for Jem and his wish to always be by her side. Although at first Jem does not know how to respond to this, she looks deep inside her and feels the same way for Spider.

*Jem constantly thinks about what Val told her, to take care of Spider, do you think she now feels as though she needs to take care of him like she would a little brother or as a lover?*

- Before the confession of Spider, Jem just probably thought of Spider as a little brother that she must keep safe and care for. But, after she probably did realize that he is a guy and needs care as a lover. But as time goes by, I think it becomes more of a little brother protection again.

## **Chapter 19 - 20**

*How did they get into the closest town?*

- They are able to get someone passing by nice enough to give them a ride to town. She happened to be taking her children to school and saw two filthy little kids in the street and could not just pass by.

*What does Rita offer to do for Jem and Spider? Why?*

- Rita offers to call their parents for them because she understands the pain of parents not having any news from their children. Therefore, she is worried that their parents will be worrying at that moment as she had been for her son.

*What does Spider do before he comes out of the diner, which is pretty unusual from something running away?*

- He pays for the meal that he ate. Usually when one is in a hurry, one would not stop for a minute and pay the bill, but this shows how straight Spider's moral compass is.

## **Chapter 21 - 22**

*How is Jem being paranoid about everyone in town?*

- Jem thinks that everyone holding a newspaper or cellphone knows who she and Spider are. Therefore, she rushes Spider to get out of town as soon as possible.

*How do the people treat Jem and Spider?*

- The townspeople have probably never seen a black person, therefore, they are afraid of Spider. Especially one woman walking with her child made her child walk on the other side of her because she was afraid of Spider's appearance.

*Who do they unexpectedly meet in the tunnel and then what happens?*

- They meet the man covered with tattoos in the tunnel where they start to run away. However, as Spider and he are fighting, the police come and arrest the tattooed man. And soon after that, the police come for Spider as well.

## **Chapter 23 - 24**

*Where is Spider now?*

- Spider is officially caught by the police. It is unknown how he got caught, whether by force or voluntarily, but he is now in prison.

*Once Jem starts traveling alone, who does she meet?*

- Jem meets a group of three girls who immediately recognize her because one of the girl's father is working on the case to catch Jem and Spider. Two of the girls are against Jem and want to turn her in, but one girl decides to take her in and help.

*Why does Britney help Jem?*

- As readers, we are not told by Britney wants to help Jem. But I think she just wants a twist of adventure in her life because her life will be like every other women and nothing really special about it.

## **Chapter 25 - 26**

*How do Britney and Jem talk about such sensitive topic of the loss a loved one so easily to each other?*

- They probably feel a bond that only teenagers feel, that feeling that there is something that understands your thoughts. Therefore, although they just met a couple hours ago, they have that connection to trust each other to comfort them.

*Who is dead in this section?*

- By overhearing Jem thinks that Spider is the one dead during the investigation. However, it turns out to be the tattooed man who suddenly had a seizure type of reaction and died on the spot.

*Why would Britney not want Jem to be caught?*

- Britney remains one of the biggest mysteries of this book. Her motives of helping Jem is completely unknown. But she probably got a feeling that Jem did not do anything and she was telling the truth to her.

## **Chapter 27 - 28**

*Where is Jem headed now?*

- Jem said that she was headed to Weston in order to meet Spider. Even though Spider won't be able to come soon, she believes that some day he will come meet her at Weston.

*At the end of this section the police find Jem, how do they find her?*

- The police probably find Jem by a reporting from the owner of Sparky, who ate all Jem's food that Britney had packed for her. And she seeks help from a nearby abbey, that was probably the closest place to go.

*What does Jem do as one of the first things she does when she reunites with civilization once again?*

- She goes into McDonald's to get a cup of coffee and an egg McMuffin because that is all she could afford at the moment. However, she was not able to eat it because it had been such a long time since she ate and felt nauseous in front of food.

## **Chapter 29 - 30**

*How does Simon help Jem?*

- Simon tells Jem that she can utilize the abbey as a sanctuary. And he also helped Jem get away from the police for a while.

*Does Jem fully trust these people, Simon and the rector?*

- She seems not to fully trust them, but she does to a certain extent. She should be trusting to a certain extent because they allowed her to stay at the abbey until she felt better for as long as it took.

*Who comes at the end of chapter 30, and why?*

- Karen comes in order to take Jem back home. But Jem refused to go until she has gotten Spider back from the police. Karen, worried for Jem's safety, reluctantly stays for another night with Jem.

## **Chapter 31 - 32**

*How does Karen attempt to understand Jem in her own way?*

- Karen tries to use that adult cliché that she has also been Jem's age and know what she is going through. However, Jem does not believe that at all. Thus, Karen's efforts become meaningless to Jem.

*What does Jem think of the afterlife?*

- Although there is a phrase "gone to a better place" engraved in part of the abbey, Jem thinks it is more appropriate that it become simply "gone." Therefore, she does not believe in an afterlife. The life that we are all living now is it.

*What does Jem do one night at the abbey?*

- Jem explores the abbey one night by taking the keys from Simon. However, the next morning she gets caught for wandering the abbey unsupervised and was therefore discovered by the public as well as the police.

## **Chapter 33 - 34**

*Do you think the rector, his wife, and Simon are being nice because of an extrinsic reward?*

- They are all motivated by some kind of extrinsic reward, because I strongly believe that there is not such thing as intrinsic rewards. Even if they say it is simply for a good cause, they probably will have another reason for being so nice to Jem and Karen.

*Anne has a reason she wants to know her number; what is it?*

- Anne is ill and therefore wants to know her date in order to be ready for her death. She feels as though she must do so much and get ready for her death in terms of her husband, her children, and everything in her life.

*Who do you think told the world about Jem's ability?*

- It was probably Britney who told everyone of her ability because there would be no one else. There are not many people who know the details of Jem's gift.

### **Chapter 35 - 36**

*Do you think the numbers are able to change under certain circumstances?*

- I think the numbers do not change under any circumstances because it seems as though this novel is more towards a life that is already all mapped out. What we do and all the events are meant to happen.

*Jem makes a public statement on her ability, what does she say about it?*

- Jem states that her ability is not real, that it was all a joke to get some attention. This was Karen's idea because if she were to have told the truth, Jem would be too stressed as she already is stressing with a couple of people asking for their numbers.

*How is the response of the people gathered to hear this speech?*

- At first, they are all outraged. However, as Jem begins to talk more of the abstract ideas that are more important than death, such as love, the people are impressed with her profound thinking and probably actually think themselves as immature.

### **Chapter 37 - 38**

*Who comes back?*

- Spider comes back, but only for a while. He must leave soon because the police did not actually listen to all the conditions of Jem.

*What does Jem think she can do in order to save Spider?*

- She thinks that if she is gone, the numbers will disappear as well because Jem and the numbers are one. However, I personally do not think killing herself will make a difference with Spider's death or in fact any other death.

*What happens to Spider?*

- Spider goes up to the tower in order to persuade Jem down. As soon as Jem comes down into a safe position, Spider starts fooling around only to slip and die.

### **Chapter 39 - "Five Years Later"**

*What is the first thing that Jem says to Val when she is in the hospital?*



- Jem's first words were "Sorry" to Val because she could not keep her promise of keeping Spider safe. But Val continues to try to comfort her by saying that it was not Jem's fault but Spider's fault for being an idiot.

*Do you think there was a reason for Spider's ashes being blown back to Val, Karen, and Jem?*

- As soon as the ashes were blown back, Jem started screaming to come back. Therefore, I think it showed that Spider wanted to come back next to Jem as much as she wanted him back in the world.

*Who is Adam?*

- Adam is Jem and Spider's son who at the very end, we find out has the ability Jem had. Although it is the end of the novel, we can probably predict that Adam will have similar troubles as Jem because life is a cycle of events that most likely will be similar.

- The End -